**Running a successful disco**

Running a disco is a great way for the PTA to raise money.  Discos can be run for adults, pupils or for both and offer people the opportunity to get to know each other while supporting a very good cause. Discos are usually economical to run and so ticket prices can be kept low.  Funds can be boosted by refreshments and the sale of items such as glow sticks. If you are providing snacks and things to sell, make sure that parents are aware that additional spending money may be required. You can give your discos a theme too, to link in with seasonal events such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, end of term and so on. Family discos, whilst attracting bigger numbers will require less volunteers as parents are responsible for their own child/ren.

To make sure that your disco is a success there are some important points to consider:

* insurance
* safeguarding children
* licences
* health and safety
* security
* finding a suitable DJ

**Insurance cover**

Before you embark on any type of fundraiser or social event, you must ensure that your association has public liability insurance in place. Members of PTA-UK automatically receive subscription linked insurance cover as part of their annual membership fee. The cover provides £10 million public liability for all PTA run events, wherever they are held, plus £500 all-risks cover for PTA owned items (details of the items need to be submitted to PTA-UK at the time of renewal or joining for cover to apply), personal accident cover for PTA committee members and volunteers and cover against money loss. For full details, please refer to the latest PTA-UK Insurance [Summary](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/insurance/summary.aspx).

If you are using the services of a commercial company, such as a DJ, they must have their own public liability cover in place.  Ask to see proof of this before the disco; your PTA-UK subscription linked insurance covers your PTA for holding the event but not the company providing the DJ service. Your local authority (LA) will be able to tell you what level of public liability insurance they require third parties to have. As there will be a minimum level, we recommend you check with the (LA) to understand their requirements. Commercial companies should then meet this requirement.

If a parent volunteers to act as DJ with their own equipment, they too will need their own public liability cover for their equipment.

If the PTA owns disco equipment, then their PTA-UK insurance will cover them for its use. PTAs that own their own equipment must let PTA-UK know its value. If it is worth less than £500, then no additional premiums are required for all-risks cover to apply. If it is worth over £500 and you wish to add all risks cover, please contact PTA-UK for a quote.

**Safeguarding children**

PTA volunteers, by the nature of their role, will come into frequent contact with children. Therefore, PTAs have a [duty of care](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/legal-and-licences/safeguarding-children-pta-duty-of-care.aspx) to ensure that the safety and well being of children and vulnerable adults is taken into account.

You will need to consider the requirement for the DJ to have a criminal record check. Most reputable DJs, working in schools will have undergone a criminal record check. If you are in any doubt, speak to the school about their safeguarding policy.

**Licences**

When planning a PTA event you must investigate whether or not a [licence](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/legal-and-licences/licences-an-introduction.aspx) is required; certain events will always require a licence. Advance planning and careful selection of the type of event you wish to offer may allow you to minimise the requirements for licences and keep overhead costs and administration to a minimum.

**Health and safety**

[Health and safety](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/legal-and-licences/health-and-safety-at-pta-events.aspx) must be taken into account both at the planning stage and at the event. A simple [risk assessment](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/legal-and-licences/pta-guide-to-producing-a-risk-assessment.aspx) should be undertaken for each PTA event, and each activity within the event, which should form part of your planning and preparation. Risk assessments should be kept simple; they do not need to be too onerous. Additional guidance can be sought from your school, your local authority and the [HSE](http://www.hse.gov.uk/) (Health and Safety Executive).

**Security**

Security issues need to be fully considered when planning a disco. Ideally, have just one door as a public entrance/exit and always have at least one person on this door during the event to keep a check on who enters/leaves the school. You must also consider access to other parts of the school. It is important to prevent anyone wandering 'off limits'. Remember that you will need to provide access to toilet facilities. Think about security and signage when arranging which toilets will be made available.

If you have alcohol at your adult/family disco you will need clear security arrangements to deal with potential gatecrashers or people affected by alcohol.

**Finding a suitable DJ**

Ideally, when selecting a DJ try to use someone who has been recommended by a colleague, friend or other PTA. It is very important that they play the kind of music that will appeal to the people at the event. It is also important that inappropriate songs that may cause offence are not played, especially if the disco is aimed at younger children.

**Publicising the event**

There are lots of ways of publicising a disco. Posters are very effective and can be produced easily, quickly and for relatively little cost. Posters designed by the pupils often attract more attention and therefore more support for the event.

Make use of the school/PTA [newsletter](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/promoting-your-pta/newsletters.aspx) and school/PTA website and send a letter to parents. If you are keen to encourage members of the wider community to attend the disco, place posters in local libraries, supermarkets and with other community groups such as brownies, cubs etc.

**Tickets**

Good practice is to sell tickets in advance and adopt a ticket only policy on the door. This will help you to control numbers at the event and is a good security safeguard, as you will know who is attending.

For a children's disco send a note to parents, with a tear off return slip, that can be handed into the class teacher, which details:

* the number of tickets required
* name/s of child/ren attending
* contact number - for the time the child is at the disco
* name of the person collecting the child/ren or consent for the child to go home alone (for older children)
* any food allergies or conditions such as asthma, epilepsy

It is also recommended that you include a disclaimer that parents agree to children taking part at their own risk. This is because genuine accidents, where no liability is attributable, will not be covered by any public liability insurance e.g. if a child trips over their shoe lace and injures themselves, this is not covered.

Keep a register of who is participating and get the signature of their parent/carer both on arrival and when leaving the premises. Make sure you have access to the emergency contact numbers so that in an emergency the parents/carers of the child can be contacted.

**PTA volunteers**

You will need a number of PTA volunteers to help with the key roles at a disco to:

* help set up the hall
* supervise the children
* cover the entrance and exits
* staff the refreshment and toilet areas
* clean up post the event

The ratio of helpers to children and the capacity of the venue should be available from the school (if you are using school premises), or from the venue you are hiring. Having a member of staff at the event can also be helpful, as this may prevent disruptive behaviour. Remember to provide facilities for litter.

**First Aid**

It is not a requirement of the PTA-UK public liability insurance for your association to provide first aid cover.  However, your association does have a duty of care and our advice is that you have someone in attendance that can administer basic first aid. Remember to provide access to drinking water throughout the disco.

**Food and Drink**

Most associations provide [refreshments](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/running-successful-events/catering-at-pta-events.aspx) for those attending a disco. Try to keep it simple and remember to organise a cash float, as you will need a lot of small change.  Offer a small range of soft drinks such as fruit juice, squash and water. Include small snacks such as fruit, raisins, crisps and biscuits.

Schools (England only) now have to comply with food-based [standards](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/running-successful-events/school-food-standards-england.aspx). Whilst the Government has explicitly stated that the food-based standards for all school food other than lunches do not apply to special one-off events such as discos, you may want to discuss this with your headteacher, particularly if your school has Healthy School status.

At an adults/family disco a bar can be very lucrative. If you are selling or supplying alcohol you will need to check out [licencing](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/legal-and-licences/licences-events.aspx) requirement.

**Smoking**

It is against the law to smoke in all indoor public places. This covers school buildings and school grounds. As the organiser of an event your PTA will be responsible for making sure that no one is smoking. Your PTA could be fined £2,500 if you allow anyone to smoke. You must also display no-smoking signs and if you don't you could be charged an on the spot fine of £200, with the penalty increasing to £1,000 if the issue goes to court.

**Dealing with an emergency**

It is important that you undertake a [risk assessment](http://www.pta.org.uk/running-your-pta/information-sheets/legal-and-licences/pta-guide-to-producing-a-risk-assessment.aspx) prior to the disco taking place and then act on it accordingly. It is good practice to have someone who is able to administer basic first aid on site, with the means of summoning emergency assistance. Make sure that the entrance to the school is not blocked.  
All event organisers should be told where the emergency exits are and where the designated meeting point is. If you do have to leave the building because of an emergency, make sure that you take a list of attendees with you, to check off names. This is particularly important if you are running a children's disco.

**Case Study: Christ Church C of E Primary School PTA, Oldbury, West Midlands**

**Christmas disco**

Janet Scott helped her PTA organise a Christmas disco. Initially the PTA spoke with the headteacher to discuss health and safety issues, including the maximum number of people allowed in the hall. *"We made sure that we didn't print more tickets than the maximum capacity of the hall.  We only sold the tickets for the disco in the school at the start and end of classes, so we restricted the sale to pupils and their relatives,"* Janet explained.

*"We also ensured we had the names of the children attending, plus the parents' contact details, in case of an emergency. One of the most important things to ensure a successful event is getting the right DJ.  We were lucky because we got the headteacher from another school to DJ and he came highly recommended and with a CRB check in place."*

The PTA ran a refreshment stall and set up a small snack shop stocked with sweets, drinks and some healthy alternatives.   
*"We managed to raise a couple of hundred pounds in all, once the expenses had been taken out.  We were really pleased, as we are just a small primary school,"* Janet added.

This information sheet aims to provide clear advice for PTAs and should be considered as a general guide. PTA-UK is committed to providing members with up-to-date and accurate information at all times so the content contained within this guidance was correct at time of print. PTA-UK cannot be held responsible for any decisions or actions taken by the PTA, based on the guidance given. For more specific advice please contact the PTA-UK Advice Line on 0845 850 5460 or [info@pta.org.uk](mailto:info@pta.org.uk).

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PTA-UK 39 Shipbourne Road Tonbridge Kent TN10 3DS